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Language laboratory use in the first three semesters of German study is outlined. First semester pattern drills and second and third semester conversation exercises are described. A rationale for the student for laboratory use is included. (AF)

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THE LABORATORY PROGRAM IN GERMAN AT POMONA COLLEGE

GUSTAVE MATHIEU

Language classes at Pomona College meet for three 50-minute periods a week, but the Language Laboratory has permitted us to add a fourth, 45-minute "laboratory" period. The underlying philosophy of our laboratory program is based on the conviction that in language teaching the sound-tape will do for the spoken language what the printed page has done for the written language. In the classroom all students can read at once; in the laboratory they can now all speak at the same time. Our classroom curriculum continues therefore to stress the development of the student's reading skill and absorption of formative cultural values; the laboratory aims at developing oral-aural skills.

For each weekly laboratory period the teacher prepares a carefully-timed 45 minute tape which contains all the mechanical instructions (page of book, whether to listen and repeat, repeat and record, etc.) and whose content-pattern for each semester level is the following:

First semester. The laboratory work is integrated with the class work, that is, the "pattern drills" in our textbook, which would normally be done in class or at home, are adapted for individual practice in the laboratory. Although these "pattern drills" are not specifically designed for laboratory practice they can easily be modified for that purpose with a little ingenuity and imagination. To illustrate:

a) Practice based on repetition and imitation.
"Wiederholen Sie, indem Sie die Stellung des Zeitwortes nach *daß* beachten.[1] Eins. Ich glaube. Er bringt es. (Pause)[2] Ich glaube, daß er es bringt. (Pause) Zwei." etc.

b) Active participation practice.
"Und jetzt eine Übung im Gebrauch der Befehlsform. Wiederholen Sie." (The student now hears and repeats the first two items after the

[1] Brief grammatical pointers serve to alert the student to the task at hand.

[2] The silent pauses are one of the most tricky aspects of making a tape. Here is a workable rule of thumb: to figure the length of the pause repeat twice to yourself silently what the student has to repeat.

FL 001 232

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model given by the teacher and then): "Und jetzt versuchen Sie es selbst mit den letzten drei Beispielen. Nach einer längeren Pause hören Sie zum Vergleich mit Ihrer Formulierung zweimal die korrekte Form. Wiederholen Sie dann das Gehörte. Drei. Arbeiten, nicht zu viel. (Longer pause in which student formulates his sentence). Arbeiten Sie nicht zu viel! (Pause) Arbeiten Sie nicht zu viel! (Pause) Vier. Fragen, nicht." (Pause) etc.[3]

This type of practice is particularly effective in exercises in which the student is asked to change tenses, word order, and in which he forms new words with the help of prefixes or suffixes. A word of caution: only those exercises which the student can be expected to handle with relative success should be adapted to the active participation practice.

c) Comprehension practice.

"Und jetzt machen Sie bitte Ihre Bücher zu. Sie hören jetzt ein paar Fragen auf Deutsch aus unserem Lesestück. In der Pause, die folgt, geben Sie Ihre Antwort auf Englisch. Dann hören Sie zum Vergleich die richtige Antwort, zuerst auf Englisch and dann auf Deutsch. Wiederholen Sie die deutsche Antwort! Eins. Liegt Deutschland isoliert in Europa? (Longer pause) No, Germany is not isolated in Europe. Nein, Deutschland liegt nicht isoliert in Europa. (Pause) etc.

Another comprehension exercise is the following:

"Öffnen Sie bitte Ihr Buch auf Seite 44, Übung römisch zwei! Decken Sie den englischen Text zu![4] Hören Sie aufmerksam zu, wiederholen Sie den Satz und übersetzen Sie das Gehörte! Und erst nachdem Sie übersetzt haben, vergleichen Sie Ihre Übersetzung mit der im Buche! Eins. In der Geschichte der deutschen Literatur spielen sie eine Rolle. (Longer Pause) Zwei. Er ist ein Dichter. . ." etc.

It might be noted that students do not try to "cheat" by looking at the translation ahead of time. The self-challenge to test their understanding is too powerful and they realize that they would be "cheating" no one but themselves.

Exercises in which visual association is important, such as in the subjunctive or long attribute, are mimeographed so that the student may have the answer in front of him during laboratory practice.

[3] The first instructions for a new type of exercise are given both in German and English.

[4] Students are told to keep a sheet of paper at hand.

d) German-German practice.
"In der nächsten Übung hören Sie Fragen, die Sie vor sich haben. Seite 159, römisch zwei. In der Pause geben Sie bitte eine Antwort auf Deutsch! Dann hören Sie die richtige Antwort. Wiederholen Sie diese Antwort! Eins. Wann wurden die ersten Reiseführer geschrieben? (Long pause) Die ersten Reiseführer wurden im neunzehnten Jahrhundert geschrieben. (Pause) Zwei. Wann wurde . . ." etc.

In addition to the "pattern drills," all the German examples in the grammar section of our textbook are included in the laboratory practice. The examples are pronounced and the student repeats while covering up the translation. Before moving to the next example, he looks at the English meaning. The review chapters as well as practice in the principal parts of strong verbs are dealt with exclusively in the laboratory. In short, the chorus work and "drill"[5] normally done in class is transferred to the laboratory where it is now handled in a dynamic and rewarding — because individual — manner.

Second Semester. The Laboratory work is now separated from the class work and becomes an independent course in conversation. Every weekly 45-minute tape follows this content-pattern:

First 10 to 15 minutes: Introduction of 8 to 10 new sections of 4 sentences each from a conversation text.[6] "Öffnen Sie bitte Ihr Buch auf Seite 23! Wir fangen mit Nummer 18 an. Wiederholen Sie, bitte! Achtzehn. Darf ich hereinkommen? (Pause) Darf ich hereinkommen? (Pause)" etc. etc. "Und jetzt dasselbe noch einmal", at a faster rate of speech, each sentence being said now only once.

Next 8 to 10 minutes: The student hears a short anecdote or story without having the text in front of him. Then he is asked several questions in German on the content of the story. In the pause that follows each question he formulates *mentally* his answer and then hears the correct answer in English to check his comprehension. After the question he hears the entire story once more at a faster rate of speech.

[5] I hope that this word will soon disappear from the vocabulary of language teachers.

[6] Two native voices are used. The German-born professors in our own and other departments and their wives have been most cooperative in recording tapes.

Next 8 to 10 minutes: Books open, the student hears once and repeats 30 to 40 previously practiced sentences in our conversation book. A special system of working forward and backward makes for a cumulative review so that in the course of the semester the sentences are worked over again and again until they become second nature to the student.

Next 8 to 10 minutes: Every laboratory period includes a song, a poem or some other material of interest which the student has in front of him in mimeographed form. Whenever the class text provides such an item of interest it is included in the laboratory. For example, the week that we read the story of the Geschwister Scholl, the students hear the high points of Goebbels' "Wollt ihr den totalen Krieg" speech in an authentic, live recording; when we read a chapter on Schubert, Marion Anderson's rendition of *Gretchen am Spinnrad* is offered; when we read about Brecht or the War of Liberation, the tape includes *Die Seeräuber-Jenny* or *Lützows wilde Jagd,*[7] respectively. Whenever there is no special item of interest that relates to the class reading, a German university song is played. Each time this part of the laboratory period is introduced with: "Und jetzt die Überraschung der Woche. Nehmen Sie das vervielfältigte Blatt, das in Ihrer Kabine liegt, und folgen Sie dem Text! Heute hören Sie Marlene Dietrich in dem Lied *Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt* aus dem berühmten Film, *Der blaue Engel,* nach dem Roman *Professor Unrat* von Heinrich Mann, dem Bruder von Thomas Mann." It ends with: "Vergessen Sie nicht den Text mitzunehmen! Er gehört Ihnen."

Last 10 minutes: "Und jetzt schalten Sie um zum Gebrauch der Zauberschallplatte! (Magic Disc)[8] Schließen Sie Ihre Bücher! Sobald Sie meine Stimme wiederhören, legen Sie bitte die Nadel auf! Fertig, los! Guten Tag. Wie geht's? (Pause) So, so." (Pause) etc.

The use of the "Magic Disc" provides for a further cumulative review, this time with books closed. It is only used after the student has said the sentences at least eight times in previous laboratory sessions. By this time his pronunciation is so good that the self-monitor-

[7] Difficult words are translated or explained in German in a footnote.

[8] The Magic Disc permits the student to record his voice and play it back instantly just like a tape. It is indestructible and can be erased for reuse, over and over again.

ing exercise acts as an encouragement by boosting his self-confidence.

Third semester. The pattern of continual variation in exercises and activity is continued in order to make each laboratory period an exciting and dynamic adventure in language. The first ten minutes introduce a new section of conversation patterns followed by either a) a section from *Circling the Globe in German* or b) a situation dialogue from *Das deutsche Leben* series. In both exercises the student has the text in front of him. The first time he listens while following the text; then he hears it again and is advised not to look at the text. The remainder of the period is divided as follows: 5 minutes of German idioms for repetition and review from a booklet that gives the idiom and its meaning; 10 minute review of conversation sentences learned in third semester, books open; 5 minutes of review of conversation sentences studied in the second semester, books closed; 5 minutes of a "quiz" program introduced as follows: "Und jetzt unser beliebtes Programm, *Frag mich was!* Wiederholen Sie jede Frage und Antwort! Wo wurde Beethoven geboren? (Pause) In Bonn am Rhein. (Pause) Wie entstehen Ebbe und Flut? (Pause) Durch die Anziehungskraft des Mondes." (Pause) etc. Because of its suspense element this quiz program is a particularly effective exercise. The next 5 to 8 minutes are devoted to the *Überraschung der Woche,* consisting either of materials related to the class text (the Ring Parable, the *Faustmonolog,* excerpts from *Tristan und Isolde*) or a poem, or story read by a native artist (*Kannitverstan,* Rilke's *Cornet, Märchenspiele*). Recordings are abundant; see for example the list issued by *Inter Nationes.*

The last 10 minutes are used for "repeat-record-and-listen back practice" of conversation sentences with the "Magic Disc."

Fourth semester. In preparation. Ideas are welcome.

Because we feel that students will derive increased benefit from their laboratory work if they understand the advantages of this new teaching tool, we have put up a large poster in the laboratory which proclaims:

What the Language Laboratory Means to you

An inexhaustible "private tutor" who is ready to work with you any time you desire and for as long as you desire.
The most efficient use of your time: you spend every minute of the period in active participation, listening and speaking.
It enables all the students to speak at the same time, just as the

book in class enables them all to read at once.
In a single laboratory session you have more opportunity to speak than you would have during an entire semester in a class of 25 students.
You do not hear the garbled pronunciation of your classmates but only the native pronunciation of "Your Master's Voice."
It reduces the inhibition and anxiety factor, so detrimental to language learning: you are on your own in a sound-proof booth.
You become your own critic: by listening back to your own voice and comparing it with that of your teacher you learn to correct your mistakes.
The various voices and accents used in the tapes condition you to the variation in speech you will encounter abroad.
You learn a new language the way you learned English: by a continual process of imitation and repetition until the "foreign" tongue becomes second nature to you.
You can advance at your own rate of learning.
It affords the joy of self-expression in another language.
It brings languages to life because it brings life to languages.
But remember: Languages are not only a tool but what people think in.

Soon we will be able to take this poster down. The results of the Language Laboratory after two semesters are its best self-advertisement.

Pomona College